

DCFS Weekly Update From the State Office

Monday, September 17, 2001

Changes At The State Office

By Richard Anderson

Farewells And Thanks To These Great People!

Abel Ortiz begins today as the Deputy for the Division of Mental Health. Even though he is moving to another division, we will still claim him as part of our Division. He has made innumerable foundational contributions to the Division and we send him off to his new endeavor with much appreciation and support for his future. Even though he will no longer be in the Division he is surely going to be an asset to us in Mental Health services. As we move to more collaborative approaches with Mental Health for children and families (like the Frontiers Projects in Southwest and Eastern Regions) we will have a supporter to advance these enhanced ways of delivering services.

Floyd Wyasket, our newly selected Indian Child Welfare Specialist, has already left us. Floyd was asked by the Ute Tribe to become a judge. This offer is a great compliment. Floyd came back to the Division after working in Colorado for the Casey Family Program. He had previously worked for our Division. After returning to us in the role of specialist, he began from the first day back to strengthen our implementation of the Indian Child Welfare Act. He has been seen as an expert in Native American matters by all those that work within the entire system of care in child welfare in Utah. We wish him success in his new assignment.

Ivy Earl decided to become a full-time mom. Ivy, as many of you know, had been doing a great job in helping Linda Winger with constituent referrals. Prior to this assignment, she had fulfilled many functions in the state office. Ivy always provided the most pleasant approach in the most difficult of situations. We send her off with much appreciation for the support she gave to everyone of us in the Division.

New Employees To The State Office

In our SAFE staff we have added three new positions. This was our way of making sure that increases in state office staff would be beneficial to the front-line work. We know you will see more response from this group as the downsizing of SAFE staff had a direct impact on all of you.

In SAFE we are happy to have **Joey Trower**, who is a new SAFE trainer. Joey is from the West Valley Office of the Salt Lake Valley Region and was a foster care worker.

Jay Davis is the new Business Analyst. Jay is from the Metro Team of the Salt Lake Valley Region and was a foster care/in-home worker. **Elaine Totten** is now on the Help Desk. Elaine was previously with Salt Lake Valley Intake.

State Office Open Positions And Changes

We have three state specialist positions that close at the end of the day today. The three positions to be filled are the CPS Specialist, Domestic Violence Specialist, and Out-of-Home Specialist. We have interview teams put together and are prepared to make selections on these positions in the most expeditious manner.

In addition, the following vacancies will be recruited for and filled over the coming weeks: deputy director; a position that combines some of what Abel Ortiz and Caren Frost were doing, such as legislature, policy, and Milestone Plan (title yet to be determined); Milestone Plan Coordinator; Indian Child Welfare Specialist; and executive secretary (reporting to the deputy director). Watch for future announcements on these positions.

Changes. For your information, Mary Steck is now the State Office Administrative Secretary (the position previously held by Paula Loakes) and Becca Splain has accepted the position of Office Technician replacing Ivy Earl.

State Office Team. As you can see we, have a lean state office right now. I am personally appreciative of the state office staff that continue to keep the quality of our effort at a high level during times of change. They model the best of good work ethics and loyalty to the mission of the Division. I cannot say enough about their accomplishments and dedication.

Child Welfare Institute

By Bert Peterson

The forthcoming Child Welfare Institute is scheduled to be held at the Provo Marriott on October 15 through 17, 2001. A complete schedule will be announced soon.

Some highlights include presenters, such as Terry Harrach, a young woman who spoke recently at the National Adoption Conference on her experience of being placed in the foster care system as a youth. She focuses particularly on issues associated with independent living and youth services. She is an articulate presenter with high energy.

Another interesting presentation will be by Anna Simmerman and Susan Manning. Anna and her four siblings were the subjects of a made-for-TV movie entitled, "The Best Interests of the Children." This movie drama was viewed in 1994 and focused on many of the issues the Iowa foster care system faced. Susan was one of the caseworkers dramatically portrayed in the movie. They will use the movie as a catalyst for their discussion on foster care and needs of children and families when children are placed into care.

Other presenters include Dr. Doug Goldsmith from the Children's Center in Salt Lake City, Dr. Kelly Lundberg, Patricia Evan, MSW, and many others. There will be presenters who will address issues related to the many functions of child welfare.

There will be a certification course on CPR and First Aid presented by the American Red Cross. Our annual awards banquet will be on October 17 in conjunction with the luncheon. I hope this gives you a brief overview of the Institute. More details will be forthcoming.

Children In Foster Care

By Nathan Miller

Hello, this is Nathan out in Fort Duchesne. I hope you view this as only a concern and an idea. I am pretty sure that someone out there has already thought about this subject. I have a concern about the way the media, as well as some of us in the Division, portray the children we serve in foster care. I have seen and heard in the media, even those of us who work for the Division, use the terms "foster child," "foster children," etc. I don't know if you have ever been bothered by such labels, but if I were in foster care I might see this as a negative label. I think it would be much more dignified if the media, and all of us as professionals, refer to our clients as "children in foster care." Numerous times, we have heard foster parents introduce their own children and then say, "This is my foster child..." I have tried to make a conscious effort to refer to the children I serve as children or "children in foster care." And certainly, the children have every right to decide whether they want to refer to the parents they are staying with as "foster parents" to maintain that bond they have with their own parents.

I am glad to be part of the Division. Thanks for listening to my concern. I hope that everyone can see that "foster child" is a label and that it's children in foster care that we serve. I hope you have a great day.

To Make Your Life Easier...Using SAFE Optimally

By Robert Lewis

Using The Notification Window To Help Manage Your Caseload

SAFE's Notification window might just possibly be a big help to workers to assist them in managing their caseloads. Here is the "true" story of Jay Davis, who recently joined the SAFE team. When he previously worked with foster care and PSS cases in the Metro Unit of Salt Lake, he discovered a way to use this window to keep on top of requirements. He reported that when he first got his caseload, he felt completely overwhelmed by the requirements and could not imagine how he could ever get on top of all of the things he was expected to do. To add to his frustration, whenever he logged on to SAFE, this Notification window kept appearing with its "dreaded list of

Then one day as he was pondering his life and other mysteries of the universe, he had this epiphany: Perhaps the Notification window could help him in scheduling required activities on his cases. He immediately penned these mighty truths to guide him in his life as a caseworker:

On the first working day of each new month, I will print a make a copy of whatever is on my Notification window.

Immediately thereafter, I will open my day planner and schedule and coordinate all of the visits, meetings, and writing and recording time, to be able to complete these requirements listed on my printout. (For example, when a court hearing or citizens review is due at the end of the month, a

monthly home visit with the foster child should be scheduled early in the month.)

Then as the month goes by, I will pay attention to new prompts [NOTE: they come up with a yellow triangle in the New column], so I can calendar new activities to be done and also can work in multiple “policies” during a scheduled visit or action. (Good examples of this technique are combining a required quarterly progress summary with an upcoming court report, or scheduling and inviting family members to a future planning meeting, during a monthly visit.)

Following these truths enabled Jay to clear his conscience and his Notification window by the 25th of each month, and may also have contributed to his recent promotion.